



**Date:** February 14, 2023

**To:** The Honorable Melony Griffith, Chair

**From:** Aliyah N. Horton, CAE, Executive Director, MPhA, 240-688-7808

**Cc:** Members, Senate Finance Committee

**Re: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT SB 281 – Commission on Public Health – Establishment**

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The Maryland Pharmacists Association (MPhA) recommends a **favorable report with amendment** for **SB 281 – Commission on Public Health- Establishment**, which will create an entity to improve the delivery of foundational public health services in the state. We strongly support the effort to develop a commission that reflects the diversity of stakeholders engaged in public health.

**MPhA seeks to amend the bill to establish a seat on the commission for dedicated representation of a pharmacist.**

The American Public Health Association (APHA) has policy 20064 entitled “The Role of the Pharmacist in Public Health.” The full policy can be accessed here: <https://bit.ly/3EunaJ9>

While we understand there is a seat for a healthcare provider, APHA’s policy is a strong statement in support of normalizing the role of pharmacists in the public health conversation. A dedicated pharmacist seat on the commission is an opportunity to do just that.

Supporting language within the APHA policy states.

**A. Role Recognition**

**Pharmacists are not formally classified as a profession within the public health work force, unlike public health nutritionists, nurses and physicians. The public health role of the pharmacist is yet to be clearly defined, broadly recognized and sufficiently promoted by public health agencies, pharmacy educators or other health care professionals.**<sup>6</sup> Pharmacists offer an accessibility that is rare among health care professionals. The pharmacist has health knowledge on which to build and is often uniquely sited in the community to provide public health services, in some cases 24 hours per day. No appointment is needed at most community pharmacies. Pharmacists work in a variety of public settings, including hospitals, drug, grocery and retail stores, and nursing homes. This convenience creates a large window of opportunity in which to provide public health services, therefore filling a void related to access to care and prevention. Further, pharmacists in the community are in an ideal position to act as information resources on lifestyle changes that can influence healthy outcomes.<sup>7,8</sup> Pharmacists are involved in health screenings (e.g., diabetes, cholesterol, osteoporosis),<sup>9-11</sup> immunizations,<sup>12</sup> pain control,<sup>13</sup> participatory and clinical research, and counseling/ health education.<sup>14</sup> They also provide information on self-management (e.g. hypertension, asthma, HIV), smoking cessation,<sup>15,16</sup> alcohol, tobacco and other drug use prevention, family planning,<sup>17</sup> medication indications and conditions (dyslipidemia).<sup>7,15</sup>

Additional comments in the policy document include,

“There are many functions of public health that can benefit from pharmacists' unique expertise that may include pharmacotherapy, access to care, and prevention services.

The pharmacist's centralized placement in the community and clinical expertise are invaluable.

... the pharmacist's contribution to the public health work force, health education, disease prevention and health promotion, public health advocacy, and health quality will aid in achieving optimal public health outcomes.”

The policy recommendation specifically states:

2. ...the need for increased awareness of the role of pharmacists in public health through the dissemination of information among schools of public health, professional societies, policy-makers and other health care employers;
3. Encourages the transdisciplinary collaborations of health planning agencies, schools of public health, schools of pharmacy, public health agencies, policy-makers and pharmacy and public health professionals to develop legislation and advocate for plans that address health care needs spanning from local to worldwide.

MPhA strongly urges the Committee to add a dedicated seat on the commission for a pharmacist to support the transdisciplinary effort to address public health needs. Having a pharmacist engaged in the Commission deliverables will ensure all public health workforce knowledge, expertise and capabilities are included.

### **MARYLAND PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION (MPhA)**

Founded in 1882, MPhA is the only state-wide professional society representing all practicing pharmacists in Maryland. Our mission is to strengthen the profession of pharmacy, advocate for all Maryland pharmacists and promote excellence in pharmacy practice.